

## Letters from Romania, 1994

September 4, 1994

Dear everyone,

Well, I've made it this far, at least. I met Phyllis in Amsterdam, and we arrived in Budapest at 11:00 a.m. local time today. After getting the luggage, the shuttle took us to the vicinity of the hotel since the driver couldn't find it. Fortunately it was only two blocks from where he dropped us off. After much pantomime with the Clerk (you try to explain that you want two separate private rooms with the bath to someone who speaks only Hungarian!) we settled in and I took a short nap. At 4:30 p.m. Harry Caldwell (the former missionary in Romania) arrived, and we spent several hours discussing plans for tomorrow. There are many things to do here before going on to Romania on Tuesday.

Anyway, I made it this far OK, and with any luck we'll make it OK to Romania. I'll write when I get the chance after arriving there. Love to all, Browder

=====

September 7, 1994

Dear everyone,

Well, six months after my appointment, here I am. I arrived by train to Sighisoara, where I was meant by Rev. Gereb's son who brought me the 30 mi. to Odorheiu Secuiesc. The train trip took about nine hours, and it wasn't too bad except that it was too hot to suit me. I was by myself in the compartment most of the way through Hungary. We picked up a number of people in Arad, Romania, and from there I had a few Romanians to share the compartment with. Romanian customs officials were cordial and took little interest in me.

Reverend Gereb's son met me on the train station platform, and helped me with my luggage to the car. We had an interesting trip back to Odorheiu Secuiesc, since he had to dodge all of the bicycles, cows, geese, goats and whatnot that also felt they had the right of way. We had to dodge more than one group of cows ambling down the road. After we arrived in Odorheiu Secuiesc ("OS" from here on), his family fed me dinner and took me to my new home. It is on the top floor of a five story apartment building, and it is a very nice two-bedroom apartment, with a large kitchen, living room, one-and-a-half baths, and a terrace overlooking the street. I am writing this letter while on the terrace. I am very pleased we have such a nice apartment; I didn't expect nearly so much. There is no TV (what good would do anyway?) and hot water runs only every other day, but all things considered, it's really pretty decent.

Phyllis went with Harry Caldwell to meet with the bishop of the Reformed Church in Cluj; they should be here tomorrow. Phyllis and I are glad Harry will not be here long. He is more trouble than he is worth. We could have done this just fine without his help. He leaves in two weeks, so good. I miss you all very much. Write me!

Love, Browder

=====

September 9, 1994 (in same envelope as letter dated 9/7/94)

I didn't get the letter off yesterday since I still didn't know where the post office was, so I will add some new developments. Phyllis arrived yesterday, so she is with me now. Yesterday we went to the Gereb's for lunch, and an English teacher at Tomasi Aron high school was there to translate for us since we had to discuss program related things. After lunch we went to the Reformed Church here in OS. Built in 1781, it was erected on the foundation of the First Reformed Church in OS, and it was built in 1633. So there has that a reformed church presence here since 1633. Incidentally, the oldest church in Romania is here in OS. A Catholic Church, it was built in the 12th century! Anyway, Rev. Gereb's church is absolutely incredible inside - I'll send pictures when I can. Daddy, a song book and liturgy is promised to you, but you probably won't get it until I return. But you will get one. After the church tour, Phyllis and I took a brief tour of Benedek Elek high school. Built in 1670, it is truly impressive. From the time of its construction in 1670 until the late 1940's, it was a private school owned and operated by the Reformed Church. The Communists took it away and all other private schools in the 1940's and has never given them back. It was named Benedek Elek in honor of a Hungarian writer of children's books, a sort of Hungarian Hans Christian Andersen. Again, I'll send pictures asap-it is must see. There is a lot of history here in Transylvania-it is everywhere you look. OS is really beginning to feel like home here. Phyllis is a pleasure to live and work with, the people are very nice, and I am very pleased. I feel sure things will be great here, and I have a feeling the two years will fly by. I am excited about teaching, and life here in Transylvania. So don't worry about me. Spirits are high, and I'm ready to start to work. Take care, and love to all! Browder

=====

September 13, 1994

Dear everybody,

First off, there is an address change. I am still at the same apartment; there is no problem with the apartment. The problem is that we have been told that mail delivery to this apartment complex is unsatisfactory, and it is far better to send mail to me at the pastor's residence (Reverend Gereb Attila). The new address to send mail to me is: Browder Swetnam, c/o Rev. Gereb Attila, Str. Bethlen Nr. 6, 4150 Odorheiu Secuiesc, Judital Harghita, ROMANIA. Sorry about the inconvenience, but I like getting mail, you know? So far I have not received any mail here, but has been only 10 days since I left. Don't panic about mail sent to me at the apartment; I could still receive it, I hope.

Things are going very well. I'm beginning to get a feel for the layout of the town, where to buy things, etc.. I have enclosed a sample of Romanian toilet paper for your amusement. It beats some old corn cobs, I guess. Fortunately not everything is so rough and crude. Prices here are ridiculously cheap. Examples: small ice-cream cone, 9¢; 2 lbs. of plums, 35¢; nice meal in a restaurant (steak, potatoes, etc.), \$1.75; top quality 1976 vintage wine, \$3. Domestic produce is very cheap. Imported goods are expensive, however: a 24 exposure roll of Kodak film is \$8.50!

Sunday we went to the Reformed Church here. The men sit on one side, with women on the other side, with the pastor standing on a little gondola-type pulpit. Dressed in his flowing black cape, Rev. Gereb looked like something straight out of an old Dracula movie! The service was precisely one hour long, and began with some prayers mumbled in Hungarian followed by some slow dirges on the old

beautiful pipe organ. Then came the sermon, of which I understood nothing since it was 100 percent Hungarian, some more funeral tunes, another prayer, then it was over. Then the men and women left out of their respective doors.

This week we will spend preparing for the classes. Placement for testing is this Friday and Saturday. By the time you receive this, I will probably be in my second week of teaching. I love and miss you all, but this next 21 months will probably speed by faster than we think. Know that I am thinking of you all always. Love to all, Browder

=====

September 19, 1994

Dear Mother, Daddy, Grandpa, and everybody else,

Just in case you didn't get letter number 3, there is an address change you should be aware of. Mail delivery to the apartment is not very reliable ( I still haven't received anything) so it is better to send it to the pastor's residence than to mine. The new address is: Browder Swetnam, c/o Rev. Gereb Attila, Str. Bethlen Nr. 6, 4150 Odorheiu Secuiesc, Judital Harghita, ROMANIA. Sorry about any inconvenience this causes. The classes start today; most everything is ready to go. We finished up the placement testing this weekend, so everything is pretty much set.

Everything is fine here; it feels more like home all the time as we get settled. I briefly met one of the other American teachers here, but we have yet to organize a get-together. With everyone preparing for classes, no one has much time for socializing.

We should be getting hooked up to cable TV this week, so it will be easier to keep up with the news ( CNN in English is offered on local cable; so is NBC). Up until now I've been having to listen to Voice of America on the shortwave radio, which doesn't offer much national news. I know about the U.S. Air Flight that barreled into the ground outside Pittsburgh Pennsylvania and that someone crash landed on the White House lawn, but not much else. How's our friend O.J. doing? Have they caught the two men that went on a murder spree in Missouri and Arizona yet?

I am managing to pick up a little Hungarian - some words and phrases here and there. People assure me there is no way to become conversational in Hungarian in less than five years ( it's very difficult), so as long as I can pick up some "survival Hungarian", I'll be happy. I have request: package delivery is better here than I had been told. It gets here, just very slowly. I will continue to plug away at Hungarian, but it also don't want to lose my Spanish. I wish I had brought them, but I didn't, so I would like you to send me a few books by it airfreight. Pay for it out of my account. Please box up and send me my red University of Chicago Spanish-English dictionary ( it's a paperback), and my Spanish Bible. I want the gold-colored hardback one, entitled DIOS HABLA HOY on the front. If you don't find it, send the other one, but I prefer DIOS HABLA HOY - it's easier to read. Also you will find the J. R. R. Tolkien's series (the Ring trilogy) in the for paperback books; they should be all together. It may require some digging out in my pile in the garage, but all of them should be in boxes marked BOOKS. They are out there somewhere. Box up and send to the address I give in this letter. Please send it airfreight, and pay for it out of my account. I would really appreciate it.

That's about it. I miss you all very much, but I'll be home eventually. Two years isn't forever. I think I will miss my computer almost as much as you all. Take care, and know that I think of you often. Much love, Browder.

=====

September 23rd, 1994

Dear Mother, Daddy, Grandpa, and family,

We just finished our first week of class's at Benedek Elek. They went really, really well. The students are fast learners, and it is obvious that they greatly value English, and education in general. The E S L materials we use are easy to use; I like them very much. When I get some pictures developed, I'll send them - maybe two weeks?

We have met some of the other Americans here. Most are with ESI ( Education Services International). Three of the four of them teach at Tomasi Aron, the Catholic school just up the hill from Benedek Elek. They are here for one year terms only, so it will probably be a new batch of them that come next year.

Today I went to the Banca Nationala Romaniei, the National Bank of Romania, to exchange money. After waiting in line for almost half an hour, my turn finally came. Unfortunately, one of the \$20 bills I had was printed before 1990, which means it didn't have the USA 20 USA 20 strip running across the middle. She apparently thought it was counterfeit, because she refused to change it to the Romanian currency, the leu. When I got home, I discovered that I have seven other pre 1990 20s that I won't be able to exchange. Ouch! I still have \$700 besides that \$160, but it still is an inconvenience. I won't be able to use them until I return home.

After the bank, I went to the big outdoor marketplace to stock up on food. I conceive why the people here age so fast - life is not easy here. Hot water every other day, you must stand in line for everything, et cetera. Conveniences are few and far between here. A Wal-Mart Supercenter would add years to the average life span of the people here! I am completely serious. Shopping, and just the ordeal of the hassles of life here detracts from a person's health over the period of several decades. I'm glad that I don't have to spend the rest of my life here - I think two years will be enough. But I value this experience and very much. It makes me realize how really rich and lucky I am. In 21 months, I return to the USA - land of Wal-Mart, McDonald's, 7-11s, and hot water 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Some days there is no water at all here - hot or cold. You don't think about such things in our country. We're really very lucky. Well, enough about the trials and tribulations of Romania. I have received mail at the apartment (two letters from Mother), but sent to the Gereb's instead! Love to all, Browder.

=====

September 30, 1994

Dear Mother, Daddy,G-pa, and everyone else,

We have just finished our second week of classes. So far they have gone very well. The students are quick learners and are eager to learn English. The only real problem we have had so far is gaining entrance to the classrooms. The locks on the classroom doors are opened with turn-of-the-century skeleton keys. The locks are so old and worn that it is virtually impossible to lock them once they are

locked. This past Wednesday I was unable to unlock the door after 10 minutes of struggling with it. A student tried, but he too was unable to open it. The student went to get the janitor who came with an entire ring of skeleton keys. The janitor couldn't open it. I finally just had class in a different classroom. Just another day in the life of Romania!

We may be getting telephone service soon. As I told you, it generally takes three to five years from application for phone service to actually getting it installed. But, a neighbor is willing to let us splice into her phone line. It is far from ideal, but it's better than no telephone service at all, which is where we are now. I'll let you know the number ( I don't know what it is yet) when it actually happens.

Not much else is new. I miss you all very much. I hope your trip to Batesville went well, Mother. Speaking of trips, Phyllis and I are going to Bucharest October 23rd to 28 to visit Brett McMichael, register as Americans at the U.S. Embassy, and meet some other people. On the way back we'll probably spend a day in Brasov touring "Dracula's castle" - you can read about it in the photocopies I left in the yellow folder, where you keep your social work books. Anyway, we should be back October 29th (Odorheiu Secuiesc). Also, I think I might take the Orient Express down through Bulgaria and on to Istanbul, Turkey, during Christmas vacation. It's a thought anyway.

Take care, and love to all. Browder.

=====

October 6, 1994

Dear Mother, Daddy, Grandpa, et al,

I have started to receive my mail at the Gereb's address, so you obviously know about the address change - good. I think that I have received all letter sent directly to the apartment, but not my Arizona TESOL which you sent not long after a left. Who knows where it went.

You have asked me to comment on some things and I keep forgetting about them, so I will answer them now:

My allergies - they cleared up three days after leaving Kansas, and they haven't bothered me since.

Washing clothes - this is done in the bathtub, for lack of any where else. It is later draped around radiator pipes in my bedroom to dry.

Shopping - we generally go shopping Friday mornings to get our food for the week at the market place downtown ( the big one ).

English speakers here - not very many, but creative pantomiming can explain a lot.

My Hungarian learning - I recently have begun meeting once per week with a Hungarian tutor. It will be slow going, but there is no particular rush.

Sightseeing - we haven't done very much. We went to Sighisoara about three weeks ago, and saw the house where Count Dracula lived as a boy called and we've been to see the 12th century chapel outside town, but not much else. There are some remains of a castle built here in the 15th century, but it was

dynamited after the 1848 revolution. There isn't much left of it to see but part of a decaying wall and keep. We're going to Bucharest on October 24th, and on the way back we plan to stop in Brasov and see "Dracula's castle".

We have just finished our third week of English classes. They are really going well. We got the cable for the TV installed this week, so now we can receive NBC Super Channel, Euronews, TNT, and of course MTV. Not even in Transylvania can one escape MTV ! We still don't have telephone service yet, but a kind of neighbor may let us splice into her telephone line. We have a telephone, just no jack to connect it to. I'll let you know the number if and when it happens.

Due to the bureaucratic inefficiency here, our visa application in Bucharest is still pending. It will be approved; it's just sitting on some bureaucrats' desk somewhere. Meanwhile, my 30 day visa has now expired. So it technically I am now here illegally. The Gerebs insist that it's not a problem, but I wonder where my sixth month visa is?

Last of all, see which you think of this. There are many different and interesting aspects of Transylvania. Ask, if you would, if the Girard or Mulberry or even the Pittsburgh paper would like a monthly column from me for 1995, maybe entitled A Year of Transylvania or something like that. Each would be about some aspect of Transylvania, such as the people, popular folk heros, food, culture, education, etc.. I expect no payment; I would do it for free, and they of course could edit the column and publish it as they see fit. They may not care, or they may be very interested. But ask them if you would.

Love to all, Browder.

=====

October 17, 1994

Dear Mother, Daddy, Grandpa, et al,

First let me say "Happy Birthday", Mother. I tried to find a card, but such things are scarce here. I got your letter dated October 2nd last week, I'm glad your visit with Mimi went OK.

I'm sorry that Dawn was not able to send a fax at the number I gave you; maybe it's just as well since I still have not talked to the family and about that. I can't remember which phone numbers I left you. In case of dire emergency, try *[names and numbers removed by editor]*. Otherwise just write a letter, and I'll get it in about 10 days. There's also the possibility that we may have phone service here by the end of the year, but don't count on it.

I may have mentioned to you that my Visa has expired, and that my application for another is sitting on some bureaucrat's desk in Bucharest somewhere. I may get the visa before the end of the year, but maybe not. It could very well be that some 20 months from now, as I am preparing to return home, that my application could still be in limbo! Everything takes forever here! Mexico is far more advanced than Romania! Anyway, the big problem is, if I leave the country, I cannot re-enter without the new visa. So my plans of visiting Bulgaria and Turkey are on hold, and simply won't be possible until I get the visa. But there's nothing I can do that it. I wonder if this bureaucrats in Bucharest expects some palm warming for his trouble. I wouldn't be surprised.

Speaking of Bucharest, Phyllis or going there next week to register with the U.S. Embassy and meet officials from AidROM, a charity organization here in Romania. I'll try to send a letter from there.

Did you get the pictures I sent you? I hope so.

Love to all, Browder.

Something else - speaking of sending boxes here, yes, I guess it is possible, although there's always a significant risk I won't get it. Things I would like sent here, if you send stuff, are things not available here such as popcorn (not microwave kind - no microwave) and tea. I'll send a more detailed list later. Another it is that my box of books finally arrived last week ( the one I mailed in July), so I have my foundation books by Isaac Asimov here. But, when I return home, I am leaving them here, so something else you could do is, for Christmas, get me another set of the series, but keep them there. That way I'll have a set to when I return home. Thanks.

=====

October 21, 1994

Dear Mother, Daddy, and especially Grandpa,

I wish I could be there for the festivities of your birthday, Grandpa, but for obvious reasons I cannot. I hope it was fun. I haven't seen Uncle George in over four years, not since grandma's funeral in Oakland.

Well, since we have cable TV now, we can keep up with news from home on NBC Super Channel. I can watch NBC Nightly News at 7:30 a.m. here, only a few hours after its broadcast back home. They said that a recent outbreak of salmonella poisoning in Schwann's ice cream had sickened thousands. I hope you all were not among the casualties.

I received my box of books I sent to here in mid July, and a few days ago I received notice of another box, I assume from you. I must go 20 mi. to Miercurea Ciuc, the county seat of Harghita County, to get it on Monday - packages are not exactly delivered to your door here in Romania. Also, stress to "the folks"(in other words, family), to send my mail to the new address because Phyllis and I suspect someone has been stealing our mail from the mail boxes here at the apartment. Maybe they're hoping to find money. I don't know. But we have definitely been missing mail, says Phyllis, and recently the box here at the apartment was vandalized.

We are still planning to go to Bucharest next week. I'll let you know how that went in the next letter. We still don't have phone service, nor the visa. Everything here takes time; one must have patience and wait.

I am getting over missing my computer, and one stop shopping at Wal-Mart and the like, slowly. Washing clothes in the bathtub by hand is chore. Remember how Vietnam POWs, when they were released in the 1970s, how they kissed the ground upon landing in the USA after years of being in Vietnamese concentration camps? Well, I'm not going to kiss the ground, but I am tempted to kiss the first automatic clothes washer and dryer I see when I return home! It will be awhile before I can daydream about that yet - two months down, 19 to go.

Love to all, Browder. P.S., did you get the pictures I sent two weeks ago?

=====

October 27, 1994

Dear Mother, Daddy, Grandpa, et al,

Well, I'm back from Bucharest now. We left it early Monday morning, and got there about 2:00 p.m.. We were met at the station by Gary Malkasian, coordinator for an American aid program called "Extended Hand." His supervisor for Brett McMichael, who is now in Brasov. Anyway, we stayed the two nights we were in Bucharest at Gary's apartment.

Phyllis and I registered as American citizens at the U.S. Embassy, so now they know that we are here should some crisis occur. Also, we went looking for another Western aid program called Aid Rom. We found it, and had a talk with the director. We may work on some joint project in the future - we'll see.

We didn't have time to see any sites, but we did see Casa de Republicii from a distance. This enormous marble building was ordered by Nicolai Ceausescu, and this certainly is a monument to a megalomaniac. Ceausescu impoverished the Romanian people for years to pay for his ostentatious palace. It reportedly has seven throne rooms the size of football fields, solid gold bathroom fixtures, etc.. It is the second largest building in the world - only the Pentagon building is bigger. And all for the use of the Ceausescu family. However, it was never finished, and the present government is loath to complete the task. So now it just stands there, a monument to the hated dictator.

While in Bucharest, we saw some Orthodox monks and nuns selling icons and things. I bought some icons, and of course a hymnal for Daddy. Hopefully when Phyllis goes home to the USA to visit next summer, she can send it to you, Daddy. I think you'll like it. I also now have a of Reformed church hymn book in Hungarian, which I need for now but I will also give you when I return in 1996.

We returned yesterday; tired, but glad that we got so much accomplished in so little time. I got the books you sent me; thank you. Also, it appears that our visa problems may soon be over. The papers have been processed and returned to the bishop's office in Cluj. Next week they should be here, and we can then go get our visas. Finally!

It was so good to talk to you on Sunday night! I am glad we now have a phone. If someone answers speaking Hungarian, explain that you want to speak to Browder Swetnam, the American, and that you will hang up and immediately call back. Then, do so. They will not understand the English, but they know the procedure. They will not answer when it rings again. Just to verify with you my number is 001-40-66-215344.

Love to all, Browder

---



November 11, 1994

Dear Mother, Daddy, Grandpa, et al,

I sent the first manuscript for the article in the Girard Press a few days ago; I hope you got it.

Well, Mother, I share your sorrow over the recent elections. The Republicans are in control of Congress now, and Oliver North, a man who should be in prison, is instead a U.S. Senator. *[Ed. note: I am mistaken here - Oliver North lost the election.]* What does this say about our new Congress? Oh well.....

Recently, Phyllis and I went to Miercurea Ciuc to get our visas, so we are legal now here in Romania. It was a hassle, but it is finally done. While in Miercurea Ciuc, I went to a nice book store where I bought a boxed set of three beautiful hardback books about Transylvania, in English. They are filled with beautiful pictures of Transylvania, much better than any pictures I could ever take. You must see them when I return home.

If I were you, I wouldn't bother sending me a Mission Yearbook for Prayer yet, since Louisville is supposed to send them out to all missionaries anyway. It hasn't arrived yet, but let's give it a few more weeks. Phyllis and I have received most of the packages sent to us, but all of them have been books and magazines; no other goodies. It is clear, however, that our mail has been opened and rifled through, most likely by postal employees looking for money or neat little goodies they can take home. So please do not send packages with presents. I am hoping they don't read this letter and "lose" it, hoping you will send me (or actually them) Christmas presents.

Mother, I hope they have your medicine stabilized by the time you get this; I think of you all often. I am not nearly as homesick as I thought I would be, though, luckily.

Love to all, Browder

Oh, yes - for Christmas, Phyllis and I are going to Budapest, Hungary, for various things, including my making a withdrawal of \$500 from my account. What is my current balance? I know that PC USA recently deposited \$444.44 into my account - I'll send the deposit slip in another letter.

=====

November 18, 1994

Dear Mother, Daddy, Grandpa, et al,

Over a week ago, I sent you the first column for the local paper. I hope it got there all right. Tell me if you did not get it.

Don't bother to send me a Mission Yearbook, because they (Louisville) are supposed to send me one here anyway. If I don't receive it by the end of December, I'll tell you so that you can send me one then.

Mother, please call PC USA and speak with Sharon Duff in the compensation and benefits department. On my check stub, I have been credited \$151.67 reimbursement for "BOP medical" for October 1994. Is this for the immunizations? Should this have gone to Dr. Davis instead of me? If so, please pay Dr. Davis immediately and tell him that I am sorry about the mixup. I have never sent any request for reimbursement to the Board of Pensions. I don't think that \$151.67 is mine.

Well, enough about business. Things are fine here. There is just two weeks of teaching left for this term, then we have a month off before the next term begins on January 8th. For Thanksgiving, Brett McMichael and another American named Kate (I don't know her last name) are coming here from Brasov to spend Thanksgiving with us a few days. Phyllis and I have not seen Brett since this past summer, and we have never met Kate in person. Turkeys are available here, but are expensive and not dressed, so we'll get some chickens (already plucked and processed) instead. We must teach on Thursday, so we are planning our feast for Friday instead.

After our last class on December 8th, we will grade the final exams, then we're going to Budapest, Hungary, on December 12th by train. We will be there about five days, during which time Phyllis will get her teeth fixed, we'll buy more books and materials, and do some sightseeing. Also, I need to withdraw \$500 from my account, which I will probably do by writing Phyllis a check, then she will cash a check at the American Express office there in Budapest. I'll try to go to Bulgaria in the spring.

We have our visas finally - they're good until April, at which time we will have them renewed.

Love to all, Browder

=====

November 23, 1994

Dear Mother, Daddy, Grandpa, et al,

People may be wondering what they can get me for Christmas, and how to get things to me. This letter is to help clarify some of these things - the good ideas and not-so-good ideas.

1. The not-so-good idea - If you send a package of stuff, it will probably get here eventually. However, it means a 30 mi. trip to the county seat (Miercurea Ciuc) to pick it out. At-your- front-door delivery service is unheard of in Romania. And don't bother calling DHL - it's prohibitively expensive. Also, unless you send perishable items, anything you send here I will have to take back with me in 18 months. Since I will be overloaded already, I'd rather not do that. Sending me a check to Romania is not a good idea. Where would I cash it? I would have to send it back to the USA to my bank. Sending cash is the worst option. Do not send me cash. I will not receive it. My mail is frequently opened. A postal employee in Bucharest will be very happy with your generous gift to his family's welfare, however.

2. The much better ideas - send me gifts, but send them to Mother and Daddy's address, not mine. I will collect them upon my return to the USA. And don't worry if they don't make it to Mother and Daddy's by Christmas - I will not be opening them until 1996 anyway. As you all probably know, Browder loves books. I would really like the following to add to my library: *The Foundation Trilogy* by Isaac Asimov, and the fourth book, *Foundation's Edge*; *Hole in the Flag* by Codrescu; *Balkan Ghosts* by Kaplan; or *The Captive Nations of Eastern Europe 1945 to 1990* by Brogan. If you buy any one of the

last three, please read it before sending it to Mother and Daddy if you like. Also, if you like, good old money is also welcome. Just send it to Mother and Daddy to put in the bank.

With much love to all, Browder

=====

December 2, 1994

Dear Mother, Daddy, Grandpa, et al,

This is the first letter I've written since Chris' death. I don't know where everyone is, whether Mother is in New York still or if Dawn and children are there in Girard. It is hard to know what to say - the shock of Chris' death will not end soon. I wish there were something more I could do.

By the time you receive this, I should be in Budapest, Hungary. We will be there December 12th to December 16th to get teaching materials, money, do some sightseeing, and get Phyllis' teeth fixed. We will go by train, of course. I'll try to write you from there.

We finally had communion in church last Sunday, the first time since I came here (we did not have it on World Communion Day - they have a rigid schedule for such things here). Everyone in the church (300?) lined up to receive the elements from Pastor Gereb and his assistant. As he mumbled something in Hungarian, he would give each person in order a chunk of bread and the communion cup of wine to drink from. I was afraid of acquiring somebody's cold or flu or hepatitis or AIDS from the common communion cup, but that was five days ago and I haven't gotten sick yet, so hopefully I'll be all right. It took about an hour for communion, so with the worship service, we were in church for two hours. All of it in Hungarian, which I still have little or no comprehension of. I can pick up an occasional word here and there, but that is all.

If you all are planning to leave Girard to live elsewhere, should I bother to continue sending articles to the Girard Press? Did you receive the one I sent a month ago? Tell me what you think of this.

I might try to send Christmas presents (small ones) from Budapest. If so, they won't get there before Christmas, but they should arrive not long after the New Year. That will include the rings, Daddy's hymn book and other little trinkets.

This week is the last one for this teaching term. Classes don't resume until January 8th, so I'll have almost a month off.

Love to all, Browder

=====

December 28, 1994

Dear Mother, Daddy, Grandpa, et al,

It was good to talk on the phone last night. I am sending the pictures as promised. One of them it is me teaching my beginning level English class at Benedek Elek Normal School (not a good picture I'm afraid; it probably won't photocopy very well), and the other is of us in Budapest. We're standing in front of the Chain Bridge, which spans the Danube River and links Buda with Pest.

One of Phyllis' students got us this typewriter. It's an old electric model, but it works OK. I'm spoiled on using my computer; this typewriter seems like ancient history. But it's better than writing everything by hand. I can correct the mistakes in pen later.

The trip to Budapest was wonderful. There are so many things to see and do there. It is so completely different from Bucharest. We all had a good time there. My next destination is south, to Bulgaria. The guidebook says that south of Sofia, the capital, there is a famous monastery called Rila Monastery - I'd like to see it. When I'll get there I'm not sure - maybe this Spring. We'll see. *[Ed note: I didn't go to Bulgaria until April 1996, and I never made it to the Rila Monastery. ]*

Not much else is news. Our classes began again on January 9th. So I'll be busy with that for another nine weeks.

Love to all, Browder